

testing to monitor the disease, and therapeutics to treat the disease.

I don't want to have to read that back in someone's face 3 months later. I would rather have the funding now. That is what most Americans want. Please stop obstructing. We don't need to go down that path, as I said. By now, we have tools and know-how to prevent closures of schools and of stores and of everything else in case another variant makes its unwelcome arrival.

Now what we need is the funding to actually purchase the tools. They have been developed by American ingenuity, American companies; but other countries are buying them because we, ridiculously, stupidly, are not funding them because of obstruction across the aisle—political objectives getting in the way of the help, vitality, and return to normal of the American people. So we need to fund these—we need to actually purchase these tools now so that we are ready.

Republicans should work with Democrats to pass another COVID funding bill A-S-A-P. It is not really much harder than that.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BORDER SECURITY

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, when it comes to addressing the many challenges facing America today, the Biden administration's preferred strategy is to blame someone else.

President Biden has tried to blame the previous administration for the supply chain challenges, and he has also tried to blame the administration for his deadly and dangerous withdrawal from Afghanistan in a precipitous fashion, which our friends and allies simply were left to read about it or hear about it in the newspaper and hustle to get their own people out of Afghanistan, as we were as well.

And now we are seeing the blame game being played out again on the border. Last week, Secretary Mayorkas, the Secretary of Homeland Security, claimed the administration inherited, in his words, "a broken and dismantled system," a defense we have heard before.

Now, there is no question that our immigration system is in need of reform. As a matter of fact, we have been working on that the entire time I have been in the U.S. Senate. But as I have said before, we never fail to fail when it comes to fixing our broken immigration system.

But the fact of the matter is the Biden administration is playing on the same field as previous administrations. Presidential authorities haven't changed. Congress hasn't passed sweep-

ing reforms that make it difficult to enforce our laws at the border. Yet, here we are, experiencing record levels of illegal immigration into the United States.

Just to provide some historical context for how bad President Biden's first year in office stacks up against previous administrations, consider this: During the first year of the Obama administration, an average of 44,000 migrants were apprehended each month—that is each month—along the southwestern border. During the first year of the Trump administration, that number was cut in half because the Trump administration had different policies with regard to removing people who were illegally coming across the border, or if they were claiming asylum, making them wait until their claims were ruled on by an immigration judge in Mexico rather than being welcomed into the United States and never to be heard from again.

So 44,000 a month for the Obama administration; 20,000 a month for the Trump administration. But during the first year of the Biden administration, numbers took off like a rocket.

An average of 176,000 migrants were apprehended at the southern border each month. One more time: 44,000 for President Obama; 20,000 for President Trump; 176,000 for President Biden. That is nearly nine times as many migrants as we were seeing just 4 years ago.

Again, Congress hasn't passed any major laws that have caused this dramatic increase. President Biden has the same authorities as the previous administrations. He has been in office for more than a year and has had plenty of opportunity to use the authorities Congress has given him to address this humanitarian and national security and public safety crisis.

He has even had plenty of time to work with Congress to pass bipartisan bills, like my Bipartisan Border Solutions Act, which I introduced with Senator SINEMA. And we now have a number of bipartisan cosponsors, and it was filed in the House with bipartisan support as well—HENRY CUELLAR, a Laredo Democrat, and TONY GONZALES from the largest contiguous border district in Texas and in the country—a Republican.

So we introduced this bill. We laid it out for the administration, thinking that maybe, just maybe, if their poll numbers got bad enough, they would be looking for a lifeline, they would be looking for a way out.

But the Biden administration has shown zero interest. The President has even threatened to end the use of title 42, which is a public health law that gave the Border Patrol some tools to repel illegal immigration by single adult males.

The Border Patrol told me a long time ago, even toward the end of the Trump administration, during the middle of the pandemic, that if they lost use of title 42 as a means to control im-

migration—admittedly not something that it was designed for but something they were able to use it for—they would lose control of the border completely.

So far we have heard no suggestions by President Biden what he intends to do. We know title 42 won't be there forever. COVID won't be a pandemic forever. But what we would like to know—and I think what the American people deserve to know—is what they are going to do in terms of enforcing the law of the land once title 42 goes away.

Well, last week, Secretary Mayorkas released what he called the "Department of Homeland Security Plan for Southwest Border Security and Preparedness."

Well, this plan is largely a recycled and repackaged version of the same vague promises that we have heard all along—bolstering resources, increasing efficiency, and administering consequences for unlawful entry.

Even the portion of this proposal that includes specifics, such as increasing the use of expedited removal, are completely unrealistic. In order to use expedited removal—and that is the means by which the Border Patrol encounters someone and says: You can't come into the United States and will be removed—you have to have enough manpower to process migrants and enough space to keep them in custody until that can happen.

Without detention space, the promise of using expedited removal is a hollow one. Given the current pace of migration and the amount of beds that Customs and Border Protection has to detain people who are subject to expedited removal, given the current pace, the number of beds is a mathematical impossibility.

Secretary Mayorkas said the Department of Homeland Security has increased the number of beds in Customs and Border Protection facilities and can now hold approximately 18,000 people.

Again, under the Biden administration, we have seen 176,000 people a month coming across the border. Secretary Mayorkas is bragging about 18,000 detention beds. Obviously, those beds would fill up quickly and be overwhelmed.

In March, an average of 7,000 migrants crossed the border every day. The administration has predicted that if title 42 is lifted, which it has attempted to do and still intends to do so, that number could reach 12,000 to 18,000 migrants every day—12,000 to 18,000 every day. And, obviously, all of those 18,000 beds for detention facilities would fill up in a single day.

That is why I believe that this plan is not worth the paper it is written on unless the administration actually follows up to execute it; and, clearly, we are not seeing action, and, clearly, the arithmetic doesn't work for Secretary Mayorkas's plan. They are going to have to engage in the same sort of

catch-and-release game which the human smugglers and the drug cartels have been playing on for the foreseeable past. And particularly now, they know that they can continue to overwhelm the resources at the border, and then the drug cartels run drugs into the country. And those will then be distributed by criminal gangs in every major city in America. So this plan is not worth the paper it is written on. It clearly won't solve the problem.

Administration officials can blame someone else as long as they want, but it is clear the American people aren't falling for it.

We saw, in the last couple of days, President Biden's own pollster said one of the reasons his poll numbers are so bad is because of the chaos and dangers associated with the border.

What we are seeing—and what the American people plainly see—is a complete and intentional policy breakdown that is the sole responsibility of the Biden administration. And these failures come with serious consequences for the American people.

When thousands of migrants are coming across the border every day, Border Patrol doesn't have the time to deter illegal immigration and dangerous gang members and other criminals from coming across the border.

Here is why. Several months ago, I visited Del Rio's Border Patrol Sector and spoke with a group of about 30 Border Patrol agents at the muster. When they were asked to raise their hand if they would be working out in the field—that is, on the border—not a single hand went up. These men and women who would normally be out on the frontlines stopping dangerous criminals and dangerous drugs from sneaking across the border are going to be tied up in paperwork with bogus asylum claims and administering these programs like this new program that Director Mayorkas is bragging about.

Because of the huge surge of migrants, we are going to continue to see the Border Patrol wrapped up in administrative duties like paperwork, watching unaccompanied children, and transporting migrants, and they will not be on the frontlines in this war that we are seeing play out, particularly the drug war playing out on our border.

When the Border Patrol is taking care of an unaccompanied child, they can't be on the frontlines. If they are knee-deep in paperwork, they can't identify and stop dangerous individuals and drugs from coming across the border, and the drug cartels know it. As a matter of fact, this is part of their game plan. Flood the border with so many people that the Border Patrol can't manage it, divert them from their law enforcement function and turn them into babysitters for unaccompanied children, and then the drug cartels will move their poison across as if they have established a four-lane highway. This is a dangerous situation that is putting our entire country at risk.

Criminal gangs that are located in every major city in the United States, including Chicago and cities in Texas, are the distribution networks for the drugs that are brought across by the drug cartels. They see the gaps created by fewer officers on the frontline, and they are taking advantage.

So we not only see foreign gang members, we also see a network of domestic gang members who are engaged in violence, gun crimes, robberies, and other crimes that have threatened the safety of people in our cities across the country. But we also see dangerous criminals coming across the border itself.

Last week, I spoke about a string of arrests that the Border Patrol in the Rio Grande Valley Sector accomplished. Border Patrol arrested half-a-dozen gang members in less than a week's time. Some of these individuals were members of the notorious MS-13, a brutal criminal organization whose motto translates into, roughly, "kill, rape, control." These are the types of individuals who are making their way across the border when the Border Patrol is busy filling out paperwork or taking care of unaccompanied children and unable to perform their law enforcement functions.

MS-13 is one of the most dangerous gangs on the planet. They have been known to kill their victims using knives, machetes, and baseball bats. In one murder in California, the victim's heart was cut out. Five years ago, an MS-13 member had a dispute with a high school student. A group of gang members kidnapped the young man, cut off his hands, and then killed him. Stopping members of MS-13 and other international criminal gangs from reaching the United States should be a public safety imperative.

American families are already deeply concerned about violent crime in our country, with the boneheaded idea of defunding the police and the blame game when it comes to law enforcement, making it harder for police to be hired and retained by law enforcement agencies across the country. Criminals are having a heyday. Crime has spiked in virtually every major city across the country. I believe it is a combination of both the drugs that are trafficked by those criminal gangs as well as the impression that we don't respect and honor the public safety function performed by our local police departments. But to my point here, we can't allow the southern border to act as a corridor for more violent criminals to reach our communities.

While overall border encounters skyrocketed in 2021, the number of gang members apprehended by Border Patrol actually decreased. Now, you might think that maybe that is a good thing, but you would be wrong, because last year alone, Border Patrol estimates that there were as many as 300,000 what they call getaways. In other words, if the Border Patrol is tied up with paperwork or babysitting or transporting

migrants and is no longer on the border, they don't know who is coming across the border, but they guesstimated it was as many as 300,000 getaways in the last fiscal year alone. So the fact that we haven't been able to count more gang members this year is hardly an encouraging picture given the status quo.

The Border Patrol has told us explicitly that gang members exploit migration surges in order to evade arrest. In other words, record levels of migration provide excellent cover for gang members and other criminals. They can either try to blend in with a larger group or they can identify and exploit the security gaps created by the Border Patrol's processing or caring for other migrants. Sadly, both practices are common these days.

When we look at all this data, there is one really important point that we need to remember. These are just the ones we know about. They don't include the getaways. They don't include the other dangerous criminals who have successfully snuck into our country or how many who were caught and then released because their gang affiliation was not yet known by law enforcement. We would much rather stop these criminals at the border than wait for them to reach our communities and endanger our families.

In addition to the great work already being done by law enforcement generally, there are initiatives like Project Safe Neighborhoods at the Department of Justice. This is one way that law enforcement is trying to wage war against these criminal gangs who use guns to commit acts of violence. It is a partnership between Federal, State, and local law enforcement that uses data-driven, evidence-based, and trauma-informed practices to reduce violent crime. But in order for them to be successful, we have to stem the flow of people coming across the border.

Programs like Project Safe Neighborhoods are exemplars of what law enforcement can do if we just give them a chance, if we just give them a level playing field to compete on rather than being overwhelmed by a tsunami of gang members, criminals, and illegal drugs.

We have a responsibility to close the security gaps at the border to prevent even more dangerous individuals and drugs from reaching our communities, but again, based on the lack of interest expressed or actions taken, the Biden administration doesn't seem to care. The Border Patrol has made no secret of the fact that it lacks the personnel, resources, and policies that only Congress can provide to carry out their mission. Agents do not feel like the Biden administration has their back, and it is for good reason.

Since President Biden took office, we have seen no meaningful action to address the humanitarian and security crisis at the southern border. The Biden administration has ignored the needs of Federal law enforcement officers in order to appease, apparently,

part of its political base who doesn't believe that there should be any border controls, who believes our borders should be open and are oblivious to the danger that poses. So, make no mistake about it, this is both a humanitarian and a security crisis, and the Biden administration's refusal to act has only made things worse.

We know the American people see crime as a big problem, and there are a lot of reasons for that, but the Biden administration needs to address the security breakdown at the border because what is happening there has made our communities even more dangerous.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

BIDEN ADMINISTRATION

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, well, I think, from the President's comments at the Correspondents' Dinner the other night, it may have taken a year, but, finally, the President and the White House are starting to realize that they have lost the American people when it comes to their agenda. I think it is because you can only betray someone so many times before they stop giving you a 2nd chance, a 3rd chance, or even a 15th chance at doing something.

After 16 months of alternating between anger, confusion, and fear, all Tennesseans can do is just have a laugh at what the White House is saying and how they are trying to spin what is actually happening and how they are trying to tell you that what you are seeing is really not what you are seeing. They know—the American people know; Tennesseans know—that much of what you hear coming out of this administration is coupled with a threat; it is coupled with a falsehood; sometimes it is even coupled with a mandate.

Joe Biden has lost what little control he had, but rather than reexamining his priorities, he has decided to cause as much pain as he can before the Democrats lose power. This is a pattern. The Biden administration doesn't lead; they mandate. They don't come to Congress and say: Let's do this or that; they throw out an Executive order. Then, when those mandates and orders that they are tossing out like they are candy backfire, they come about this by trying to inflict as much pain as they can.

When business owners pushed back on pandemic mandates that made their survival impossible, this administration didn't relent; they doubled down. They just accused everybody who disagreed with them of being a danger to their communities.

We all heard the stories: Oh, they are putting profit over people. Oh, they don't care about their communities. They just want to keep the doors open.

But no—what they wanted to do was serve their communities.

When parents asked questions about what their kids were learning in school, the Justice Department threatened to throw them in jail if they protested curriculum influenced by critical race theory and other radical ideologies. When the administration saw their climate panic message wasn't resonating anymore, they came out with a plan to double down again and take away the few transportation and energy options people could still afford. Their response to historic levels of inflation is to tax and spend the American people into submission.

See, this is the way they do it: If you are a parent, you show up to ask questions about what you are seeing your child study. Then they want to report you and say: You are the one who is causing a problem.

Isn't it amazing how this administration has allowed cancel culture to infiltrate everything that they do?

It is their way or the highway, as we would say in Tennessee, because they plan to run over you; they plan to cause pain. This is not governing; it is punishment—punishment for your beliefs; punishment for your actions; punishment for standing up for the Constitution, for democracy, for freedom of speech. They are going to punish you.

Now, I thought that the administration had hit rock bottom with their response to the recordbreaking inflation they created, but their plan to address Joe Biden's border crisis has been what has taken the cake. It is foolish, and it is dangerous.

The situation along our southern border is bad, and it is getting worse. Just this weekend, I spent some time out in West Tennessee. I was over in Benton County, which is the northwest corner of the State, and talked with Sheriff Kenny Christopher. He told me that his officers are finding fentanyl in about 80 percent of the drugs they seize. Everything is laced with fentanyl. This is marijuana, heroin, gummy bears—everything. Fentanyl is on the loose, running wild. Between 2020 and 2021, 64,000 people in this country died from fentanyl overdoses, and 2,014 of them were Tennesseans. Where is this coming from? It is coming right across that southern border.

It is so important to note that this is a problem that escalated after Joe Biden became President. The cartels knew, with the Border Patrol, that Donald Trump had its back but that now, with Joe Biden, it is running wide open. Every town is a border town, every State a border State. We are losing control over the flow of drugs. The cartels are in control of that southern border. You don't come across without them. Nothing comes across without them. They are so emboldened that

every law enforcement officer I meet with can tell you what cartel hub—that is right, cartel hub—here in this country, on U.S. soil, is setting up their drug trafficking, human trafficking, sex trafficking operations. Control is lost at that border.

In March, CBP recorded more than 220,000 encounters with people trying to illegally enter the country. Fortunately, they were able to use title 42 and expel about 100,000 of those 220,000 individuals.

Title 42 has been a lifesaver for the Border Patrol. Don't believe me. Go ask them. They will tell you: That is a lifesaver. They have used it more than 1 million times to deny entry and ease the strain on their limited resources. They need it. They need title 42, and they will tell you they need title 42.

So, of course, the Biden administration is getting ready to take title 42 away. Let's just open that border up. It is endangering our sovereignty, endangering our people. Every town is a border town, every State a border State; but let's throw caution to the wind, open the border. Come one, come all. We had 160 different countries come across that border last year. Let's see if we can break that record this year—that is what this White House is saying, total disregard for the American people. Because if you take away title 42, you are going to see not 6,000 illegal entries a day, you are going to see 18,000 illegal entries a day.

They know that this is what will happen. And do they have a plan? No, they don't have a plan. They are expecting that 18,000 people a day. That works out to over a half million a month—a half million a month.

Now, you know, Secretary Mayorkas admitted last week in his hearing that he just didn't seem to have a plan, but he was expecting this to happen.

In Tennessee, we have 345 cities, towns, and villages—345. Out of those 345 cities and towns, 90 percent of those towns have a population of 20,000 or less; so it is the equivalent of the population of a typical Tennessee town coming across the southern border every day. How long can we sustain that?

Your State of Illinois, Madam President, you all have about 1,200 towns and cities that are incorporated. You have got 102 counties. Out of those 1,299 incorporated towns and cities, 90 percent of those, likewise, are 20,000 or less in population. Or if you had a half million a month, that is equal to a Naperville, Aurora, and Rockford together. How long could Illinois sustain that?

See, this policy not only affects the border with the United States and Mexico and those towns and communities and counties, it is every county in this country.

When Mayorkas was speaking last week over in the House, what he didn't do was confirm that the administration has a plan to reduce illegal immigration or, indeed, if they care at all about